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Abstract

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ARTICLES

Fear and Fascination in the Big City: Rilke's Use of George Simmel
in *The Notebooks of Malte Laurids Brigge*

Neil H. Donahue

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Abstract. This essay examines Rainer Maria Rilke's *The Notebooks of Malte Laurids Brigge* (1910) as one corner in a triangle of reciprocal influence and affinity in early twentieth-century modernity consisting of Rilke, the sociologist Georg Simmel, and the art theorist Wilhelm Worringer. In the notes, this essay documents the biographical relations among the three, but in its text it demonstrates through textual analysis *how* Rilke's descriptions of Malte in Paris enact Simmel's categories of psychological response for man in the metropolis, as delineated in his essay "The Metropolis and Mental Life" (1903). Rilke's descriptions of Malte's attempts to overcome his fears of the metropolis coincide then with Worringer's thesis in his *Abstraction and Empathy* (1908) on the psychological origins of abstract art and Joseph Frank's later elaboration of that thesis into an aesthetics of spatial form. (NHD)

El año de Gracia and the Displacement of the Word.

Catherine G. Bellver

221

Abstract. The power of the established, self-sufficient written word is considerable. Written texts not only furnish material, incentive, or direction for new texts, they also inspire, orient, and mold those who read them. *El año de Gracia*, a novel by Cristina Fernández Cubas (1985), vividly illustrates the imprint novels can leave on a young mind. The protagonist learns, however, that the concept of the world he formed on the basis of literary models is erroneous. In *El año de Gracia* literature fails to sustain meaning, and meaning itself becomes irrelevant. Both oral and written discourse are in some way restricted, displaced, and subverted. The voice is deprived of its potential to tell stories by the linguistic impasse between

the protagonist and his companion; only the magical, non-discursive dimension of the spoken word affords a tenuous conduit for interchange between the two. Writing, for its part, cannot also flourish because the addresser cannot find an accommodating addressee for his text. Daniel must forfeit his desire for an ideal reader in favor of the private pleasure of writing as a process. He discovers that scientists and ecologists are not any better disposed to communication than the coarse shepherd Grock. Betrayed by both literature and society, the protagonist turns away from both. As writer he learns that only the act of narration is meaningful, not literary models. Yet since his oral and written words are displaced, communication on a collective level ceases. (CGB)

Castles in the Air: Vision and Narrativity in Julien Green's *Minuit*

Robert Ziegler

233

Abstract. One feature of Julien Green's 1936 novel *Minuit* is its examination of the problematical relationship between narrative discourse and its receiver. In the text, various characters act as narrators who order and assign a temporal structure to real or fictive events and rely on a narratee's receptivity to discover the meaning intended. In view of the attention accorded in the text to the process of story-telling, one may conclude that Green intended his work to interrogate the nature of its own narrativity. In addition, Green's character, the enigmatic Edme, is a mystic by reason of language, evoking through speech in himself and in others a glimpse of ineffable "truths." In him is resolved the apparently insoluble conflict between religious seeker and narrator-esthete, thus legitimizing the work of the novelist Green, "a mystic who never ceased to repress the language of the poet." What remains to be answered is whether Edme emerges as a simple illusionist-charlatan or whether he is given the role of a narrator who can speak a metaphysical language. The argument of this essay is that rehabilitating what for Green is the epistemological function of narrative does not depend on designating as real or unreal the world to which narrative alludes, but on establishing a pact between the receiver and sender of a message whose truth is irrelevant. (RZ)

Some Wheat and Some Chaff: Jean Paulhan and the Postwar Literary Purge in France

Michael Syrotinski

247

Abstract: A somewhat overlooked figure of French literary history, Jean Paulhan has resurfaced in the polemic surrounding the wartime activities of many respected intellectuals, most prominently Blanchot, Heidegger and de Man. Commentators on Paulhan's role in the intellectual history

of the period have tended to avoid reading his texts closely. Paulhan—one of the “heroes” of the literary Resistance in France during the Second World War—took the extremely unpopular and controversial stance after the Liberation of criticizing the National Committee of Writers’ proposed purge of suspected collaborationist writers. This essay demonstrates the rigorous consistency of Paulhan’s position in the context of his other works, and argues for the necessity of taking into account the internal logic and rhetoric, as well as the explicit argument, of his texts. A careful reading of *De la paille et du grain* (*On the Wheat and the Chaff*) reveals an unusually forceful and original insight into the relationship between language, literature and political commitment, which has many resonances for current debates on this question. (MS)

Colonialism, Enlightenment, Castration: Writing, Narration and Legibility in *L’Etranger*

Larry W. Riggs and Paula Willoquet-Maricondi

265

Abstract. This analysis combines the issue of “narratability” with some psychoanalytic insights, focusing first on the key incident in Meursault’s story when he involves himself in writing. Meursault inadvertently *inscribes* himself in a conflictual drama when he writes a letter for Raymond Sintès. The writing of the letter prefigures both Meursault’s later taking up of the gun with which he will kill an Arab and his inexorable evolution toward a situation that makes him capable of narrating and being narrated. It seals him into the colonial world of language. To become capable of narrating is both to become a colonist and to be colonized. It requires a subject/object relationship *within* the self. Meursault’s story is an “allegory” of becoming legible in two ways: as an individual in a real cultural situation and as a character in a novel. Our analysis also links another of the novel’s underlying themes—fragmentation of the environment—with our examination of Meursault’s movement toward narratability and condemnation. The unbearable intensity of the sun throughout the novel is a token of this fragmentation. The colonialists’ tendency to experience their presence in Algeria as both a necessary “civilizing” influence and a noble self-sacrifice is legitimated and perpetuated by their refusal to adapt their costumes and ceremonies to the environment. (LWR, PW-M)

Translating from Memory: Patrick Modiano in Postmodern Context

Timothy H. Scherman

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Abstract: In this essay I have attempted to renegotiate the relationship between the work of Patrick Modiano and the conditions of literary

production designated by "postmodernism." Contemporary French reviewers and critics have greeted with guarded praise Modiano's efforts to write in a language and about events that belong to another writing. Following their lead, this essay first explores the tension (often lost on American readers) created by the possibility that the historical referent of Modiano's texts—not only Modiano's personal past but the horror of the Occupation—might now exist only as a weightless narrative "effect." As such, it is a part of style somehow comparable to and manipulable by a postmodern, purely textural hermeneutic. As many critics have pointed out, Modiano reveals his awareness of this problem through his obsessive thematizing of "memory." My argument here is that by employing a specifically *translational* mode of writing that would co-opt the "loss of loss" characteristic of postmodernism, Modiano is able to renew our sense of the jagged reality of history as always remembered by a finite subjectivity. I demonstrate this translational mode in an analysis of Modiano's *Rue des boutiques obscures*, in which we find not only the patently postmodern and self-referential detective story form, but the textually invoked subject of that form, presented as "translations" that imply historically lost but nonetheless palpable, real, and at times horrible, antecedents. (THC)

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